

# Joan of Arc, or an Ideal Androgyne : Mark Twain's "Marvelous Child"

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*The vision of a warrior bold  
Would set him dancing.  
— "Miniver Cheevy" —*

## Introduction

A sense of being "born too late" often besets one in time of dejection and desperation. E. A. Robinson epitomizes this sense of utter alienation and ontological emptiness the poet himself experienced in his portraits of the people in an imaginary New England town, Tilbury Town. Miniver Cheevy in Robinson's poem quoted in the epigraph "wept that he was ever born"; he never felt at home with his time, feeling forever dislocated in the vulgar and hollow life in America at the turn of the century. Instead "Miniver loved the days of old/ When swords were bright and steeds were prancing ;/ The vision of a warrior bold/ Would set him dancing." He missed the medieval grace, sighed for what was not, and dreamed an empty dream, and kept on drinking. Like Miniver Cheevy, Robinson was never at peace with the America of his time, where he found nothing but a vulgar khaki suit and the tinfoil glitter of commercialism.

Bereft of both history and cultural tradition at the time of the nation's birth, a sense of being "born too late" or of being in a wrong place seems to

plague American poets and novelists, which in turn has become a compelling incentive for them to create and to come to terms with the time and place they happen to find themselves in. Deprived of the glory of the Medici, E. A. Robinson escaped from his time to poetry as an alternative world of beauty and grace. Or like his alter ego Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, Ezra Pound, being "out of key with his time," left "a half savage country" to Europe and to a world of Attic grace.

Likewise, more than once in his lifetime, Mark Twain in desperation attempted escape into a distant past, "when the swords were bright and steeds were prancing," in the world of romance and heroism, well aware that such is "all a dream, —a grotesque and foolish dream" (*The Mysterious Stranger* 253). The deaths in the family which visited the writer—his much-adored Susie's in 1896 and his eternal love Olivia's in 1904—aggravated Twain's skepticism and misanthropy which by that time became a chronic disease with him. Nonetheless, out of such nadir of his life came Twain's so-called "historical romances": *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889), *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* (1896), and the posthumously published fantasy *The Mysterious Stranger* (1916).

Among Twain's canonical works these historical romances have been neglected by his critics with the exception of, perhaps, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* which the author claimed a failure. While *The Prince and the Pauper* (1881), another historical romance, has been dismissed as a mere children's story, *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc*, the finest book he thought he ever wrote, has been the least read, therefore, least discussed of Twain's works, until it received a certain consideration in Harold Bloom's *Joan of Arc* (1992), a collection of criticisms and articles on this "literary character," then followed by a serious critical

appraisal in Laura E. Skandera-Trombley's *Mark Twain in the Company of Women* (1994). Skandera-Trombley's book presents an illuminating reading of the influence of women and feminist perspectives in Twain's life and work. Hers is a revisionist biography of the American humorist, who has traditionally been portrayed as a Redskin : a river boat pilot, Western correspondent, and world traveller. Skandera-Trombley argues that Twain surrounded himself with women, who were the muse, the editor, and the producer of his stories and books.

This short essay concerns itself not so much with a literary reassessment of Twain's fictional biography of Joan of Arc as recollected by Twain's narrator, Louis de Conte, as with the portrayal of the only heroine Twain created who held him in thrall literally and in fact. Joan of Arc is the only female hero who lived and died in a specific place and at a particular historical time, yet who continues to live in people's imagination as the image of female heroism, and who more often than not is used as figurehead of patriotism in time of national crisis. To understand who Joan of Arc is, and to consider what made Mark Twain write his personal recollections of this "marvelous" girl constitutes the subject of this essay. And answers to these questions may reveal what our time chooses to make of Joan of Arc or "The Riddle of the Ages" as Twain aptly characterizes her — an ideal androgyne.

## I The Historical/Literary/Joan of Arc

Joan of Arc (Jeanne d'Arc ) was born into a peasant family in Domremy, Lorraine, probably in 1412. At the age of thirteen she began to see the visions of St. Michael and St. Catherine, and hear the voices that told her her mission in life was to liberate France from the

English domination and insure the coronation of Charles VII.

In 1429 Joan persuaded de Baudricourt, the captain of nearby Vaucouleurs, to accompany her to Chinon to have an audience with the Dauphin. She was provided with a man's clothes, arms, and a horse for the journey—she disguised herself as a man. This peasant girl in man's clothes impressed the French monarch with her impassioned dedication to the cause, and was sent as a captain with the army that forced the English to end the siege of Orléans.

Joan's eloquence of speech and military valor became legendary, yet she failed to convince the King to continue fighting the English army near Paris ; and she was forced to remain at court until April of 1430. In the meantime, she took a party of soldiers to the defense of Compiègne, where she was captured and ransomed to the English. Even after long interrogation and trial on charges of witchcraft and fraud, she never lost her presence of mind. She was forthright and remained true to her mission until the end.

Strangely enough, she was only convicted of wearing male clothes, an offense against the Church<sup>1)</sup>. She signed a statement of guilt, which she recanted two days later. Thus she was convicted as a relapsed heretic, abandoned by the indifferent King and betrayed by the ecclesiastical authorities ; and was burned at the stake in Rouen in May, 1431.

Twenty-five years after her death, Rehabilitations began in 1456, and her legend grew. She acquired the name of "Joan of Arc" during the sixteenth century, became a popular patriotic heroine in the nineteenth century and was finally canonized in 1920.

Given above is a gist of all too brief a life of Joan of Arc as she lived, and of the vicissitudes of her martyrdom and sainthood. Who this maid of Orléans was and what she did seem crystal-clear, yet more than any other single historical character, she has provoked the imagination of many a

poet, playwright, novelist, and historian/scholar to do what they will with the facts of her life, simply because she took it upon herself to save her country from calamity, answering to the divine calling she claimed she heard in her birthplace, Domremy — *she* worked a miracle.

Among many literary representations of Joan of Arc a well-known example readily comes to mind. In *The First Part of Henry VI* by Shakespeare Joan of Arc is portrayed as a vociferous wench, not as a humble maid as might be expected. The myriad-minded poet lived too close to the actuality of her legend. Furthermore, he was writing a nationalistic history play himself and he could not help but be a chauvinist for that matter ; to the English she was an enemy. Yet the dramatist is faithful to the historical fact that Joan is a valiant warrior, who single-handed overcomes the Dauphin with her military prowess and with her forthright speech when she is given an audience, with which Shakespeare's history play opens. For a maiden who is "by birth a shepherd's daughter" and whose "wit untrained in any kind of art," the speech she makes to persuade the King is eloquent enough ; powerful words flow out of her mouth :

Lo, whilst I waited on my tender lambs,  
And to sun's parching heat displayed my cheeks,  
God's mother deignèd to appear to me,  
And in a vision, full of majesty,  
Willed me to leave my base vocation  
And free my country from calamity (I, iii, 55-60).

Similarly, Shakespeare's rendition of this simple peasant girl enhances her legendary swordmanship that she is more than a match for a military-trained knight : "Stay, stay thy hands! Thou art an Amazon, /

And fightest with the sword of Deborah" (I, iii, 83-84). To this she humbly answers that she is given a divine protection, otherwise she is weak : "Christ's mother helps me, else I were too weak" (I, iii, 85).

Now both military valor and skilfull horsemanship this peasant girl was endowed with, and the famed verbal eloquence she demonstrated are the two major offenses no woman of good sense would have dared to display, because these were not her virtues but they specifically belonged to the male code of honor. If she dared, it was at the risk of losing her good name and at the cost of personal identity ; in other words she was violating the gender code or transcending the gender difference. So women felt as if they were to unsex themselves if they ever deviated from the path assigned to them. In the dark ages when women were regarded as an inferior sex, and such was the time when Joan of Arc lived, women dissenters and women of superior knowledge were often accused of witchcraft. If they excelled in the spheres other than those prescribed as intrinsically female, their virtues or excellencies were believed to come from supernatural evil sources. To be different, that is, to be superior meant a serious social crime worth dire punishment ; excellency in woman of any kind is attributed to supernatural power ; hence women of uncommon power and wisdom were often made scapegoats as witches. As late as in the early part of the twentieth century (not long after Joan of Arc was canonized) Virginia Woolf told students at Girton College, Cambridge : "Publicity in woman [was considered] detestable" (96).

The two cardinal offenses woman is warned against—publicity of her excellence especially in military skill and commandership and oratorical excellency—are now my key to understanding the nature, and therefore, the significance of this "woman in history," to which Mark Twain has

given an inkling in his recollection/reconstruction of Joan of Arc.

Now one other issue Mark Twain has avoided but which we need to pay attention to is the question of her sexuality. We are told that she was uncommonly beautiful, which in itself makes her an easy prey to the male "gaze," an object of male desire, and which in sexual politics could be turned into a potent weapon. Neither Shakespeare (nor George Bernard Shaw later on) forgets this aspect of Joan of Arc that she is a woman with flesh and blood ; Shakespeare's portrayal of Joan of Arc is clearly that of a sexy "witch," well practiced in ways with men. In Shakespeare's *Henry VI Part I*, she is portrayed as a strumpet, far from the image of a simple innocent "marvelous" girl of Twain's "recollections."

When the French Monarch makes an implicit proposition, Joan comes up with an instantaneous and clear-cut verbal rebuttal which is loaded with sexual innuendos : "I must not yield to any rites of love,/ For my profession's sacred from above./ When I have chased all thy foes from hence,/ Then will I think upon a recompense" (I, iii, 92-95). Here Shakespeare adds a paint of sexuality to her otherwise pure forthright character. Furthermore, just before she is taken to the stake the holy maid resorts to her "privilege" (sexuality), saying, "Will nothing turn your unrelenting hearts?/ Then Joan, discover thine infirmity,/ That warranteth by law to be thy privilege :/ I am with child, ye bloody homicides./ Murder not then the fruit within my womb,/ Although ye hale me to a violent death" (V, vi, 59-64). To be sure, it is quite natural, from the British point of view, that she is made a sorceress and a whore, an enemy : "It's sign she hath been liberal and free" (V, vi, 83). Just the same, such portrayal of the martyr is nothing but an inadvertent slander on the part of the playwright.

Thus, Joan of Arc is raped and sexually harassed, as it were, by the male pen=phallus throughout history. Different periods and social/political climates have exploited the innocent peasant girl from Domremy to fit their needs and have created different images of "this marvelous child," projecting their own needs and ideas on the image of the maid. Her myth then often becomes a cultural Rorschach test, in which picture we see reflected our inner longings we cannot get hold of in our actual life, either temporal or spatial. Especially, in the nineteenth century the surge of nationalism in France called for an emblem of exemplary patriotism to bring about the national unity and Joan of Arc was exploited as a handy figurehead of that jingoism. They needed just what Joan of Arc, in 1430, embodied—the image of an agile knight in armors bearing the French standard on horseback (Warner 256–58).

Mark Twain was familiar with these historical developments and vicissitudes of the legend of Joan of Arc ; he read the historical documents of her life and trials, and was influenced by the materials available in his time. Naturally, his understanding of her legend was colored by the sentimental portrait of Joan of Arc created in the nineteenth century discourse concerning this historical person. Even so Twain's love affair with his "marvelous child" is phenomenal. As has been stated earlier, Twain liked his fictional biography of Joan of Arc best of all his works. What is the secret that moved the American writer, a democrat, a man's man, and an atheist<sup>2)</sup>, to write a life of the patron saint of France, a royalist, a woman, and a Catholic? There seems little to lure the American writer. Yet, in addition to his fictional biography of Joan of Arc, Twain wrote another essay in 1904, the year his wife died. The essay "Saint Joan of Arc" is a straight-forward peroration of idolatry, given with "the sworn



testimony."

Just like the portrait of a valiant soldier on horseback given in Shakespeare's *Henry VI Part I*, Twain testifies to her genius for war and generalship worthy of Caesar and Napoleon. Furthermore, Twain has the sworn testimony to "her moral greatness," and "to a fortitude which patiently and steadfastly endured during twelve weeks the wasting forces of captivity, chains, loneliness, sickness, darkness, hunger, thirst, cold, shame, insult, abuse, broken sleep, treachery, ingratitude, exhausting sieges of cross-examination, the threat of torture," to which she never surrendered, and "the frail wreck of her as unconquerable the last day as was her invincible spirit the first" ("Saint Joan of Arc," 318). If she is all that Twain testifies and the more, she is, indeed, as he says, "the Wonder of the Ages": "And when we consider her origin, her early circumstances, her sex, and that she did all the things upon which her renown rests while she was still a young girl, we recognize that while our race continues she will be also the *Riddle* of the Ages" (319-320). What becomes clear from the essay is that Joan of Arc was a *natural* genius, not a trained and experienced one, and that she was simple, pure, and brave: these are the virtues that Twain adored in a girl so young and so untrained. Joan of Arc is all that Twain the natural aspired to be and failed.

## II Louis de Conte/Mark Twain Revealed

Twain's fictional biography, *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* is a lengthy book, which consists of three uneven parts: Book I entitled "In Domremy" takes up only one eighth of the whole book, yet it is a key to what happens in the later life of the noble child. Book II "In Court and Camp," covering more than half the volume, heavily draws on historical

records, and Book III "Trial and Martyrdom" records the details drawn from the historical materials of her trial and rehabilitation, followed by a brief "Conclusion." The story is recounted in a casual tone of voice characteristic of Twain's storytellers from Simon Wheeler of "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" (1865), Huck Finn of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), and to the narrative voice in the posthumously published *The Mysterious Stranger*.

"Personal Recollections" in the title of Twain's book, *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* is not the author's but his fictional narrator's, who calls himself Louis de Conte, Joan's playmate, "her page and secretary." The artifice of the frame story is twofold : the biography is preceded by the translator's "preface," which explains that the biography is freely translated out of the original unpublished manuscript in the national archives of France by Jean François Alden. Hence the narrator in Twain's text is further removed from the reader, who listens to the voice of the translator rather than the original biographer. The history (=ies) of Joan of Arc is, therefore, Twain's "twice told tale" : first in the translator's preface and in de Conte's *Personal Recollections*.

The translator's "preface" testifies to the uniqueness of the biography ; the character of Joan of Arc is unique, because "[i]t can be measured by the standards of all times without ... apprehension as to the result. Judged by any of them, judged by all of them, it is still flawless, it is still ideally perfect ; it still occupies the loftiest place possible to human attainment, a loftier one than has been reached by any other mere mortal" (545). The translator's commentary continues in a highly exalted tone, which merges into that of the narrator in the biography *per se*. His preface in itself reads as an unalloyed homage to Joan of Arc as if the author had no other means

but reiterate himself in idolatry ; the profile given here is, therefore, a flat caricature, the virtues personified: honesty, mercy, fortitude, compassion, largeness of mind, and honor :

"She was truthful when lying was the common speech of men ; she was honest when honesty was become a lost virtue ; ... she gave her great mind to great thoughts and great purposes when other great minds wasted themselves upon pretty fancies or upon poor ambitions ; she was modest and fine and delicate when to be loud and coarse might be said to be universal ; she was full of pity when a merciless cruelty was the rule ; she was steadfast when stability was unknown, and honorable in an age which had forgotten what honor was ; ..." (545). In sum she was "perhaps the only entirely unselfish person whose name has a place in profane history. No vestige or suggestion of self-seeking can be found in any word or deed of hers" (546). And what the translator cannot tolerate is the cruel treachery Joan of Arc suffered at the hands of the beneficiaries of her generous heart and mind : "And for all reward, the French King whom she had crowned stood supine and indifferent while French priests took the noble child, the most innocent, the most lovely, the most adorable the ages have produced, and burned her alive at the stake" (547). Here as elsewhere in Twain's portrayal of Joan of Arc, the association with Christ who died on the Cross is all too obvious, the entirely unselfish person, ambition-free, innocent person being repaid by ingratitude. The only difference between the two is, as again redundantly the translator adds in "A Peculiarity of Joan of Arc's History" hers is "*the only story of a human life which comes to us under oath, ....*" The history of no other life of that remote time is known with either the certainty or the comprehensiveness that attaches to hers" (549). "One hell of a heroine!" Twain's narrator

could have said, but in his *Personal Recollections* he is demure and he is nothing if not reverential.

The translator's peroration ends with a comment on the trustworthiness of the narrator Louis de Conte : "The Sieur Louis de Conte is faithful to her official history in his *Personal Recollections*, and thus far his trustworthiness is unimpeachable ; but his mass of added particulars must depend for credit upon his own word alone" (549). It is "his mass of added particulars" that needs some scrutiny in order to see what the author behind his mouthpiece has in mind in his adoration of the "marvelous child."

Louis de Conte begins his personal recollections of his playmate in his old age long after her martyrdom to his great-great-grand nephews and nieces : "This is the year 1492. I am eighty-two years of age. The things I am going to tell you are things which I saw myself as a child and as a youth" (553). The year 1492 is the very year Columbus discovered the American Continent, an incident, according to Pudd'nhead Wilson, is worthy of celebration but which it is much luckier not to have happened. In such a choice of the year echoes Twain's sense of alienation, of being "born too late," or of "not having been born at all." At the same time he is in desperate need to pass it on to his posterity, the story of the "marvelous child" who became the last stronghold de Conte/ Mark Twain in time of desperation must needs dream about : "As the years and the decades drifted by, and the spectacle of the marvellous child's meteor-flight across the war-firmament of France and its extinction in the smoke-clouds of the stake receded deeper and deeper into the past and grew ever more strange and wonderful and divine and pathetic, I came to comprehend and recognize her at last for what she was—the most noble life that was ever born into this world save only One" (553–54). The reference to Christ the

redeemer is again all too obvious ; the association is, however, the French nobleman de Conte's and not the American humorist's.

The picture that emerges from the voluminous book is that of the aging narrator as well as that of Joan of Arc, the romanticized figurehead drawn from historical documents, which is an *idée fixe* for the narrator as for the author. As de Conte reconstructs the memories of his childhood, so does his creator Mark Twain project his longings and ideals onto the flawless girl of his fantasy. Hence, Twain fails to penetrate the mystery of the historical Joan of Arc, just as many historians have failed before him. For many of the nineteenth century historical sources Twain read in preparation are heavily colored by the Armagnac tradition that idolized and sentimentalized Joan of Arc (Harris 25), which served his purpose and the image of his dream girl. Twain needed just a simple pure innocent peasant girl, who is a natural genius for military valor, yet ambition-free, free from the shackles of ordinary life, and most of all free of female sexuality. The image of an adolescent boy/girl with ambiguous sexual identity is what satisfied the requirements of Twain's idea of personal freedom. And a sense of humor and verbal agility as well as agile horsemanship into bargain. Twain saw all this personified in the person of Joan of Arc, "a human life which comes under oath," and the author/biographer has no worry about the credibility of his materials or no need for fabulation. What more could any biographer ask for?

As has been stated already Twain is quite faithful to the historical facts of Joan of Arc's life, but he provides the "mass of added particulars" in his fictional biography of the Saint to make her his "marvelous child." Of the episodes de Conte reminisces in Book I entitled "In Domremy" two of the "added particulars" deserve examination here because these episodes are

crucial for unravelling the significance of Twain's Joan of Arc, and the relevance of her life to our time not as the emblem of patriotism, nor as virtues personified as Twain's essay on Joan of Arc and his fictional biography have revealed. Rather Twain's "marvelous child" is best understood, in our time, as a staunch feminist, who died at the stake because of her vision of a gender-free world, and her transvestism of which she was first convicted. Joan of Arc was in a man's clothes which she wore on purpose to give herself personal freedom to do what she did. She violated the gender code and threatened a veritable "raison d'être" for man. Thus, she could be an image of ideal androgyne.

### III Joan of Arc as a Public Speaker

The first episode is the story of the Fairy Tree. Domremy, where de Conte spends his childhood is still a peaceful dreaming village as he recalls it. "*L'Arbre Fée de Bourlemont*" is a majestic beech tree, and is believed to have the power of prophesy. Under this Tree at the age of thirteen Joan begins to see the shining shadows flitting in and out, and hears "the Voices" telling her that her mission in life is to save the country. The story of the Fairy Tree is a story of deprivation : in the good old days both the adults and children in the village were enjoying an idyllic life under the Tree with the fairies, though invisible. Once by an unfortunate careless accident they were seen by a village woman ; immediately the priest of Domremy denounced the fairies as blood kin of the Fiend and warned them never to show themselves on pain of perpetual banishment from the parish. Thus the village is deprived of the romance that enriched its life. Religious institution and its functionaries (priests and ministers), if not the Spirit, have been the constant target of Twain's ruthless indict-

ment ; he is relentless in his damnation of the evils of institutional authorities and their systems. But Twain never criticized the One, the Holy Child, with whom Joan of Arc is identified, either explicitly or implicitly, in de Conte's personal recollections and Twain's essay as well. In his eyes, they are both the sinned against and suffered cruel betrayal for their unself-seeking "ambitions." The banishment of the fairies is a portent for what is to come, and anticipates the people's suspicion and fear of supernatural power, and foreshadows the future of Joan's life and the accusation brought against her on charges of witchcraft, because of the more than humanly possible miracles she works.

De Conte reminisces : even as a child "Joan the Bashful" —her nickname along with "the Beautiful" and "the Brave" — could easily be provoked when touched on the tender spot: her innate sense of justice, where the weak and the sick and the innocent are betrayed and victimized. Then Joan "the Bashful" transforms into Joan "the Brave" and retorts to the Father of the Church using sophistry that the law is against the intention, not against the innocent act, that the fairies are innocent of what they do because they do not know what they have done (565), echoing Christ's words, even though Joan is to suffer from her forwardness, and is eventually tricked into penance by the priest, who is far more experienced in the ways of the world and human nature. What an innocent child could do is ineffective and powerless in the face of the inhuman machinery of authority, particularly the religious authority in the 1430s. A storm of words flows from Joan's mouth in defense of the fairies, and the innocent and the depraved for that matter ; Twain's "marvelous child" in her speech is endorsing democratic principles, reminding the reader of a suffragist or abolitionist on the platform the American Twain witnessed in his time :

"It was *their* home—theirs, by the grace of God and His good heart, and no man had a right to rob them of it. And they were the gentlest, truest friends that children ever had, and did them sweet and loving service all these five long centuries, .... The poor fairies *could* have been dangerous company for the children? Yes, but never have been : and *could* is no argument. Kinsman of the Fiend? What of it? Kinsmen of the Fiend have *rights*, and these had ; and children have rights, and these had ; and if I had been here I would have spoken—I would have begged for the children and the fiends, and stayed your hand and saved them all" (569).

And de Conte recounts to his audience how Joan was stamping her small feet in fury, and he is overwhelmed by the "whirlwind of passion." This episode concerning the Fairy Tree is only a part of the "mass of his added particulars" of which credibility the translator warns the reader in his "preface," but such "mass of added particulars" makes Twain's *Joan of Arc* his book, not anybody else's. These "added particulars" are inserted in de Conte's recollections of his childhood and his playmate, because such is the nature of reminiscences especially remembered by an old man, and reinforce the sympathetic nature and loving care of the peasant girl, who is elsewhere described feeding her pets out of her bowl of porridge and beans : "... all the outcast cats came and took up with her, and homeless or unlovable animals of other kinds heard about it and came" (571) —a veritable St. Francis of Assisi.

The other episode of Joan's legendary mercy and eloquence of speech concerns the tramp who comes to her door begging food and refuge, an omen of the oncoming war to the remote Domremy, which marks the end of their idyllic childhood. Joan befriends the man, offering him a portion of her food, as the people are suspicious of the road-straggler, and nobody



lends him a helping hand. Joan's father forbids her to offer him food, the order Joan disobeys, a symbolic act of defiance on the part of the girl, as she later on refuses to marry the man of her father's choice, a very serious offense a daughter commits on pain of death or eternal celibacy<sup>4)</sup>.

Joan's "public" performance of speech is a vintage Twain, the rhetoric she wields to persuade her father and the people is reminiscent of Minenius's "pretty tale" in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* that each part of body is equally precious and important. Joan argues that the head and the stomach are independent agents and the stomach is not responsible for what the head thinks or does. The harangue the thirteen year old girl makes in defense of the beggar is spectacular, another example of impassioned speech for which Twain's Joan of Arc comes to be known.

"Father, if you will not let me, then it must be as you say ; but I would that you would think—then you would see that it is not right to punish one part of him for what the other part has done ; for it is that poor stranger's head that does the evil things, but it is not his head that is hungry, it is his stomach, and it has done no harm to anybody, but is without blame, and innocent, not having any *way* to do a wrong, even if it was minded to it..." (573). The logic she resorts to is absurd, "a most idiotic speech anybody has ever heard," but nonetheless the narrator enjoys it and is intoxicated with its nonsensical sophistry. The point is taken up by the Mayor, Aubrey, the self-appointed orator, who acknowledges a grain of sense in what Joan says, but he somewhat distorts her idea that the head and the stomach are independent of each other, giving a hierarchical order to the head over the stomach ; "*It is a man's head that is master and supreme ruler over his whole body, ... no part of the body is responsible for the result when it carries out an order delivered to it by the*

head. ... the head is alone responsible for the crime done by a man's hands or feet or stomach," and the mayor goes on with the issue of responsibility, arguing in the manner of Joan the thirteen year old that "Responsibility makes a man responsible for only those things for which he is properly responsible ..." (574. Emphasis mine).

"Can a man's stomach plan a murder? No. Can it plan a theft? No. ... Can a stomach, of its own motion, assist at a crime? The answer is no, because command is absent, the reasoning faculty is absent, volition is absent—..." The verdict is that "there is no such thing in the world as a guilty stomach ; that in the body of the veriest rascal resides a pure and innocent stomach ; ..." (575). Thus, the Mayor finishes his speech in accordance with Joan's sophistry, but the one who receives the praise from the audience is the Mayor, the supreme ruler "the head," the man of authority, the Mayor of Domremy, and not a girl of thirteen. The narrator continues his story : When Aubrey is done, everybody present cheered and clapped, praised him to the skies. It was splendid to see his success (575).

But he misses the point that it is Joan and her feeling heart for the weak and the distressed that has won, even though the power of speech (the Mayor's practiced rhetoric) is all that matters. "Eloquence is a power, there is no question of that. Even old Jacques d'Arc was carried away, for once in his life, and shouted out—'It's all right, Joan—give him the porridge!' " (575–76). Yet, Joan outwits them all, because she does not wait for the verdict, and gives the man the porridge : Joan was embarrassed because she did not wait for the verdict, had given the stranger the porridge, knowing that it would not have been wise to wait, since she could not tell what the decision would be. "Now that was a good and thoughtful idea for a child" (576). This added episode enhances the

character of Joan of Arc as Twain's narrator reconstructs in his recollections, which gives a bold relief to her sympathetic heart, and more than anything else, to the courage and determination with which she acts out what she instinctively thinks to be right.

Likewise, Joan's defiance of her father the incident highlights is only the beginning of her dramatic life which ends in disobedience of Church authorities, for which she is to be burned at the stake. That she obeys the voice within herself, that she does not need any intervening agency between God and herself is against her religion, Catholicism, a grave offense for which she pays. And Twain's narrator, without making further comment leaves it for the reader to judge and to make what one can of the evidences he offers in his recollections. For wittingly or not, de Conte of the Catholic faith and of noble birth as he introduces himself, betrays himself in his recollections, just as he makes his playmate Joan of Arc such a staunch democrat. The premise that man is "responsible for only those things for which he is *properly* responsible" is a sly comment that the supreme agent of authority, the head, does not take the responsibility where it's due, instead passes the buck, as it were, to the innocent "stomach" ; in other words the target of indictment is the despotic ruler (the head) that issues the order without taking the proper responsibility for its consequences. It is the American value, therefore, that the narrator (a French royalist) endorses, and his heroine Joan of Arc (the Maid of Orléans) is no other than the All-American girl incarnate.

Twain the democrat valued the efficacy of public speech and believed in the power of language—sophistry is good enough for him—that could either save or condemn the speaker. Pudd'nhead Wilson loses his face because of his nonsensical puzzle about the half of a dog, but is

rehabilitated later in the story as "the Daniel in court" for solving the problem. Also Huck Finn recalls the story of the wise judge in the Old Testament. Winning the case in court is regarded as supreme virtue and the public speaker, the statesman or the lawyer, could be the hero in America and for Twain. And the renowned orators—Daniel Webster, Patrick Henry, or Abe Lincoln—are all men. The slender figure of a girl as a successful public speaker and a valiant commander, therefore, becomes of special significance for her biographer ; she becomes the very image of "ideal androgyne"—the male virtue in a female form. In *Joan of Arc* the simple peasant girl is given the wonderful power of speech which wins her fame, and the episodes above-examined are necessary "added particulars" to convince the reader of the wonder-working speech a mere peasant girl makes before the Dauphin, which wins her his trust in her competence as commander of the French army.

### Conclusion—Joan of Arc in Our Time

As has been observed in the preceding discussion, Mark Twain was attracted to Joan of Arc the historical person for her legendary attributes—agile commandership on horseback, valor, loving care, patience, unselfishness in public commitment, —just as writers and historians before and after him attempted to portray "the Wonder of the Ages." Besides, Twain in time of bereavement (Susie's and Olivia's) was able to appease the burden of his grief in his fantasy of the "marvelous child." She provided him with the proven materials which helped him to portray the ideal childhood innocence, because more than any other single character in his books, she is the wonder incarnate, so the title "marvelous child" best suits the portrait given in *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc*

recounted by Louis de Conte, "her page and secretary."

Now what follows is *my* speculation about what Twain does not write in his reconstruction of Joan of Arc, and Skandera-Trombley's *Mark Twain in the Company of Women* (1994) mentioned in the introductory part of this essay can be cited in support of my hypothesis. The author argues that one Anna Elizabeth Dickinson (1842–1932) could have been his contemporary model along with the historical Joan of Arc for the portrayal of the heroine of *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc*. Dickinson was known as "The Lecture Circuit's Joan of Arc, who had a great influence on Twain and his wife with her pro-suffragist and abolitionist position" (Skandera-Trombley 143–150). Joan of Arc is naturally equipped with her eloquence in speech as well as her generalship, which is indeed a marvel in *her* time, but woman on public stage is no new phenomenon and is becoming more of social scene in Twain's own time, when the first women's rights movement was going on.

The first women's rights meeting at Seneca Falls was held in 1848, and Margaret Fuller and Elizabeth Peabody, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were all ardent and powerful speakers for their causes. Henry James gave an interesting rendition of the women's issue in *The Bostonians* (1885), whose heroine is an inspired public speaker. Therefore, woman on public stage is a familiar scene to Mark Twain, and Skandera-Trombley contends in her book that Twain depended much on the power of women in more than one way. Curiously enough, Mark Twain unwittingly confused the period he is reconstructing in his historical romance with the latter half of the nineteenth century in America. To Twain the writer the historical precision is important only to the degree that answered his need ; in Joan of Arc, his "marvelous child", Twain found the most potent and effective

vehicle for all the important emotions and ideas he wanted to articulate. Her command of generalship, which the narrator compares with that of Caesar and of Napoleon to her credit, and the eloquence of speech in winning the point are the virtues regarded as male values and accomplishments in the 1430s. The patriarchal society had to keep her down and condemn her as an agent of supernatural power. It is an interesting coincidence that Joan of Arc's rehabilitation and eventual canonization follow the development of history that has come to recognize woman as equal to man legally. The secret of Joan of Arc, looking back, is that she disguised herself in man's clothes in order to transcend the gender role, she dressed (armed) herself in man's clothes, because in her time that cultural symbol gave her freedom to do what she was destined to do, a man's (more than a man's) work. And this genius of a girl knew that trick well, probably too well. Transvestism is the charge Joan of Arc was first convicted of in her trial and she died for it. Marina Warner observes, "transvestism does not just pervert biology ; it upsets the social hierarchy" (Warner 147). Women in men's clothing were the "abomination" to the social order, and to God in her time.

The significance of Joan of Arc for our time ? Twain's "marvelous child" becomes for us the image of "ideal androgyne" : a radiant slender figure of a girl/boy working wonders. The question of her sexuality which Shakespeare has made so much of in his depiction of the female hero is evaded in Twain's portrayal of Joan of Arc. He simply ignored the problem as he did with most of his characters since his heroes are adolescents, like his "marvelous child." Her maidenhood, her asexuality was crucial to the image of female heroism for Mark Twain ; that she dies a maid is the ultimatum to make her a martyr and a saint for Twain, as

Twain was never comfortable with the treatment of adult sexuality.<sup>5)</sup> Twain's characters are all boys, young boys who are denied their sexuality. His only heroine, Joan of Arc, represents pure innocence ; it is in accordance with historical facts. She is flawless beyond question. She is all that is good, the embodiment of all that is pure, simple, delicate, and noble, who never grows up, like Huck Finn who lights out for the "Territory ahead of the rest," leaving the civilization behind—a wonderful dream but "a grotesque dream."

In such escapism lurks Twain's infantilism, and the avoidance of responsibility is its distinctive feature ; Tom or Huck never takes responsibility, and they are excused because they *are* eternal boys. On the contrary Joan of Arc, a mere child, takes all the responsibility any one can possibly take and dies. All the more reason Twain falls in love with the "marvelous child." Her biographer felt he could not praise her enough ; so Twain reiterated the same "obituary" over and over again : in the preface, an apologia in *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc*, and in the essay Twain wrote later on. Joan of Arc is the noblest, the most unself-seeking hero that Twain could possibly have exploited just like the other historians of her life ; in that sense, too, she still suffers her martyrdom.

#### Notes

1. In *Deuteronomy* it is prescribed as follows : The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment ; for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God (22 : 5). Marina Warner quotes the passage as an epigraph in the chapter, "Ideal Androgyne", in her *Joan of Arc* (139).
2. This is Marina Warner's qualification (See Warner 251). However, as for Twain's religious faith it is beyond the scope of my discussion in this essay.

Just the same there is no question about the fact that Twain had no quarrel with Jesus Christ being a historical person, being the pure innocent man like Joan of Arc as Twain recollects her in his fantasy.

3. Quotations are from *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc*. Page references are given in parentheses following the citations.
4. cf. Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I, i.
5. See Maxwell Geismar's scathing comment on Twain's *Joan of Arc*. Geismar finds it hard to understand Twain's attraction to the "sexless non-nubile Maid of Orléans, referring to Twain's frank descriptions of dark-skinned women of the Sandwich Isles which obviously have sexual undertones (Quoted in Harold Bloom. pp 45-46).

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## 要 約

# ジャンヌ・ダルク、両性具有の理想像—— マーク・トウェインの「驚異の少女」

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もっともアメリカ人らしい作家とされるマーク・トウェイン。彼の彗星のような人生——ハレー彗星とともにこの世に生まれ、その再出現とともに世を去ったという（1835-1910）——には多くの謎に包まれた部分がある。南北戦争後の金メッキ時代をつぶさに生きた南部人でありながら、東部上流階級出身の淑女オリヴィア・ラングドンと結婚、コネティカット州ハートフォードに邸宅を構え、黒人の使用人を有し、紳士<sup>ジェントルマン</sup>としての生活を享受した「コネティカット・ヤンキー」でもあった。このヤンキーはまた、南北戦争後のアメリカの進歩と機械文明を信奉し、その恩恵を最大限に利用する一方、アーサー王伝説の時代にも憧れたロマンチスト、サミュエル・クレメンス / マーク・トウェインという二つの顔をもったアメリカ作家である。

トウェインの代表作といえば、永遠の少年をテーマにした『トム・ソーヤーの冒険』（1876）や『ハックルベリー・フィンの冒険』（1884）などがあげられるが、同時にまた史実に題材を求めた『王子と乞食』（1882）、『アーサー王宮廷のコネティカット・ヤンキー』（1889）、『ジャンヌ・ダルク回想記』（*Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc*, 1896）など、いわゆる歴史小説を手がけている。これらの歴史小説は「センチメンタルな駄作」とされて文学的評価は必ずしも高くなかったが、最近ではその再評価が進んでいる。

生涯、愛妻オリヴィアや三人の娘（スージー、クララ、ジーン）をはじめ多くの女性に囲まれて人生を過ごしたトウェインだが、不思議なことに女性特に大人の女性を描くことはなかった。そのマーク・トウェインが何故、殉教

者・聖者として崇められるジャンヌ・ダルク（1412-1431）に魅了され、「個人的回想記」とする彼女の「伝記」を書いたのか、南北戦争後のアメリカという歴史 / 政治的コンテキストのなかで、その「謎とき」をするのがこの小論の目的である。その作業を通して、この歴史上の人物ジャンヌ・ダルクの表すシニフィエとは何か、特に現代社会におけるジャンヌ・ダルクという記号の表すものとは何かを考察したい。